



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
*Milwaukee County*  
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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## **Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, State Rep. David Crowley to Host Community Input Session on County Office on African American Affairs**

**MILWAUKEE** – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and state Rep. David Crowley, chair of the Milwaukee Democratic Caucus, will on Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, from 5:30 to 7:30pm, host a community input session on the County's Office on African American Affairs.

This community input session, facilitated by the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion, will take place at the COA Goldin Center 2320 W Burleigh St, Milwaukee, with the purpose of discussing state legislative ideas that center on the issues of workforce development and criminal justice reform. County officials will also lead a brief conversation on OAAA initiatives already in progress.

"Now more than ever this Office and its mission are my highest priority," County Executive Chris Abele said. "As we tackle these important issues, it is incredibly important for me to engage the community, hear from social justice stakeholders, and earn the support of neighbors around the County. Working together we can and will achieve meaningful progress in eliminating racial inequalities."

"This will be a great opportunity for us to gather input from community members on what they believe our agenda and goals should be. While we as elected officials must lead, we must lead by the direction of the people," Rep. David Crowley said.

### **About the Office on American Affairs**

In just a few months, and without a dedicated staff in place, the Office has had great success with two initiatives, the Opportunity Knocks program and UpLift MKE.

"Building a Foundation," an Annual Report detailing the Office's first year, is available [here](#).

Opportunity Knocks, which launched in fall of 2016, is a novel housing model that utilizes home equity created through home renovation to fund reentry services and first-time home ownership. Opportunity Knocks takes tax-foreclosed homes in Milwaukee County suburban municipalities, renovates the homes while providing job training to nonviolent House of Correction (HOC) offenders, provides reentry services to the offenders after the renovation, and sells the house to a first-time homeowner through the County's new Section 8 Homeownership Program paired with HOME funds for down payment assistance.

This program will help expand the House of Correction's existing reentry services and job training and placement capability, allowing us to empower more people to live a better life.

The County has helped even more people to date with UpLift MKE, a unique job training and placement program that began one year ago. Working with community partners like the Milwaukee Bucks, Milwaukee County has already placed more than 100 individuals in jobs averaging more than \$15 per hour through UpLift MKE. These job training and placement efforts are targeted directly to workers, particularly those in and near the Sherman Park area, who most need support to successfully climb the ladder of opportunity.

This program has been so successful that County Executive Abele expanded it less than a year in. His 2017 budget added an extra \$500,000 in funding for UpLift MKE and \$165,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Milwaukee to add a Youth Career Development project manager to serve teenagers in Sherman Park and other areas. In 2015, more than 300 teenagers found employment through the efforts of the Boys and Girls Club, and this funding will expand their efforts.

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